

# Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw

Field Marshal Sam Hormusji Framji Jamshedji Manekshaw, (4 April 1914 – 27 June 2008), widely known as Sam Manekshaw and Sam Bahadur, was the Chief of the Army Staff of the Indian Army during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, and the first Indian Army officer to be promoted to the rank of field marshal.

He is widely regarded as the architect of India's victory during the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war.

This article will give further details about Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw within the context of the Civil Services Examination.

## Early Life of Sam Manekshaw

Sam Manekshaw was born in Amritsar on 14 April 1914 to Hormizd Manekshaw and his wife Hilla. Hormizd Manekshaw was a doctor who ran a thriving clinic and pharmacy in the centre of Amritsar. The couple had six children (four sons and two daughters) with Sam being the fifth child and third son.

Yearning to be a doctor like his father, Sam asked his father to send him to London to study medicine. His father refused on the basis that Sam was not old enough and that two of his brothers studying engineering in London were already supported by Hormizd.

Instead, Manekshaw entered the Hindu Sabha College (now the Hindu College, Amritsar), and in April 1932 sat his final exams held by the University of Punjab, passing with a third division in science.

It was at this that the Indian Military College Committee, set up in 1931 recommended the establishment of a military academy to train Indians for officer commissions in the army. The candidates for the academy would be selected for a three-year course based on an examination conducted by the Public Service Commission. When the notice for the examination was floated, Sam Manekshaw, in an act of rebellion against his father's refusal, applied for a place and sat the entrance exams in Delhi. On 1 October 1932, he was one of the fifteen cadets to be selected through open competition.

## Military Career of Sam Manekshaw

Upon Sam Manekshaw's commissioning on February 4, 1935, he was posted to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Scots as it was standard practice to be posted in a British unit before being sent to an Indian unit. He was later posted to the 12th Frontier Force Regiment stationed in Burma where he was appointed as the quartermaster of his company in May 1938.

The future Field Marshal would see action in Burma upon the outbreak of World War 2. He would serve with distinction during the Bruma campaign of 1942 earning the highest decoration offered to commonwealth soldiers, the Military Cross.

Upon the Partition of India, Sam Manekshaw's unit, 12th Frontier Force Regiment, became part of the Pakistan Army, so he was reassigned to the 8th Gorkha Rifles.

Before he moved to his new appointment as the commanding officer of the 3rd Battalion, 5 Gorkha Rifles, Pakistani forces infiltrated Kashmir on 22 October, capturing Domel and Muzaffarabad.

At the time of the signing of the Instrument of Accession (signed on October 26, 1947) by the Maharaja of Kashmir, Sam Maneekshaw was carrying out aerial surveillance on the approaching Pakistani Army. It was he who suggested that the Indian Army be airlifted into Kashmir to prevent its capture.

In 1957, he was sent to the Imperial Defence College, London, to attend a higher command course for one year. On his return, he was appointed the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 26th Infantry Division on 20 December 1957, with the acting rank of major general. Manekshaw was promoted to substantive major general on 1 March 1959.

## Role in the Indo-Pak War of 1971

When the demand for greater autonomy for East Pakistan was rejected by the West Pakistani government, a secessionist movement took root. In March, the Pakistani Army responded to the secession movement with violence. This action killed thousands of East Pakistanis and forced millions more to flee to India. Knowing fully well that the refugee crisis would put a strain on the country's economy and presented with an opportunity to outfox its rival, India decided to assist in the formation of the new nation of Bangladesh. The India Pakistan War of 1971 was about to begin.

Sam Manekshaw was asked if the Indian Army was ready for by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in April. He replied that most of its armoured and infantry divisions were deployed elsewhere and it would take time to move them towards the border of East Pakistan. In addition, the Himalayan mountain passes were still open and it would lead to a possible Chinese intervention which would make the conflict even more complicated for India. Sam Manesksaw guaranteed that if he was to handle the conflict on his own terms he could guarantee victory. The Prime Minister agreed to this.

Sam Maneskhaw formulated a strategy which would use all the three services of the Indian Army along with auxiliary support from the Mukti Bahini, a 75000-strong guerilla force composed who fought for the liberation of East Pakistan. These guerillas were instrumental in harassing the Pakistani army by destroying supply lines, disrupting communications and relaying crucial information back to the Indian Army

The war officially began on 3rd December, 1971 when the Pakistan Air Force bombed the Indian Air Force bases in western India. Under Sam Manekshaw's leadership, the Indian army carried out a combined-arms strategy which effectively destroyed Pakistani resistance in the eastern theatre of the war and prevented any help coming from its western wing

With all strategic areas occupied and Dhaka effectively surrounded by the Indian Army on 9 December, 1971 Sam Manekshaw implored the Pakistani forces to surrender unconditionally, promising them that they would be treated fairly and saved from the retribution of East Pakistan's population. He repeated his message on the 11th and 15th of December as well

When a United Nations Security Council meeting on the issue failed to yield any result, the commander of the Pakistani army knew there was no hope for prolonged resistance. He accepted Sam Manekshaw's offer of surrender and it became official at 9:00 A.M on December 16th. With this act, the war had officially ended and the new nation of Bangladesh was born.

After the war, Indira Gandhi decided to promote Manekshaw to the rank of field marshal and wanted to appoint him as the first Chief of the Defence Staff. However, bureaucratic interference prevented his appointment to the post of Chief of the Defence Staff and the creation of the post itself.

## Later life of Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw

For his service to the Indian nation, the President of India awarded Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw a Padma Vibhushan in 1972. He retired from active service on 15 January 1973 after a career of nearly four decades. He settled with his wife, Silloo, in Coonoor, the civilian town next to Wellington Cantonment where he had served as commandant of the Defence Services Staff College earlier in his career.

Post-retirement he would go on to serve as an independent director on the board of several companies and, in a few cases, as the chairman.

Manekshaw died of complications from pneumonia at the Military Hospital in Wellington, Tamil Nadu, at 12:30 a.m. on 27 June 2008 at the age of 94.

Annually, on 16 December, Vijay Diwas is celebrated in memory of the victory achieved under Manekshaw's leadership in 1971.